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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes placement credentials of 64 employed and 64 non-employed college graduates who had used the same campus placement center. The study indicates that the variables of academic performance, biographical data and age are potent predictors in the current job market. The variables of work experience, personal recommendations, and cocurricular activities contributed less weight to criterion prediction. (Author/HFD)

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# The Relationship of Placement Credentials to Employment of College Graduates

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# The Relationship of Placement Credentials to Employment of College Graduates

In the current job market, approximately 1300 corporate and government employers recruit annually on college campuses to fill their occupational needs (College Placement Annual, 1976). However, the criteria used in the selection of college graduates differ among individual recruiters and their companies (London & Hakel, 1974). There is general agreement among college placement officers that placement credentials play a significant role in the selection process but college recruiters are not so sure. Those two parties agree that biographical data, educational history, and work experience are important parts of the file but disagree on the relative importance of grades (Windle, Van Mondfrans & Kay, 1972). Nevertheless, placement credentials are used extensively in college recruiting and usually provide recruiters with their first view of the applicants, giving data that interact variously with the perceptions of individual recruiters (Heneman, Schwab, Huett, & Ford, 1975).

The importance of college recruiting has stimulated an impressive amount of research on placement credentials (Windle et al., 1972). For example, academic grades, participation in extracurricular activities, previous work experience, and personal references are examples of variables that have been related to employability. In addition, criterion-relevant biographical data have been excellent predictors of job proficiency (Asher, 1972).

## Statement of the Problem

The majority of research on placement credentials are ratings, opinions and judgments made by recruiters, placement officers, and students of the importance of selected variables to the recruiting process. There is less research, however, identifying credential variables that are predictive of actual employment. Since the need for such research is high, the present study attempts to determine whether or not placement credentials contain information that discriminates between applicants who were employed as a result of the recruiting process and applicants who were not employed as a result of this process. If such information is found, the study also attempts to identify the variables or combinations of variables that provide the best discrimination.

## Method

### Subjects

The subjects were graduating seniors during a two year period (1972-73, 1973-74) who actively sought employment with companies and government agencies recruiting at the University of North Dakota Placement Center. Because the majority of those recruited at that Center are graduates of two colleges representing vocationally-oriented curricula (Engineering, Business and Public Administration), only graduates of those colleges were selected for study. Sixty-four subjects who were successful in obtaining employment were compared with an equal number from those colleges who were not employed through that placement process. Selection of subjects was random, in proportion by college to job applicants at the Placement Center, and evenly divided by year of graduation. Of the 128 subjects, five were female.

Sources of Data

The complete placement credentials, including personal data, college and work experiences, personal appraisals, and transcripts, were divided into 46 specific variables for the analysis.

Statistical Procedures

The variables were grouped into eight sets (work experiences, recommendations, activities, etc.) and setwise linear regression was used to show the relative contribution of each set to the prediction of the criterion, viz., employment or not. Those sets that contributed most to the prediction, and which analysis of variance by regression showed to be significant predictors as sets, were subjected to a stepwise backward linear regression to judge the relative contributions of the variables within the sets. The .05 level of significance was applied throughout the study.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 reports the results of the setwise linear regression procedure. Set 6 (courses and credits in the major) is shown to be the best predictor of the criterion followed by Set 1 (biographical data), Set 2 (grades), and Set 4 (sources of financial aid). The analysis of variance by regression for individual sets showed these sets to be significantly related to the criterion (Table 1, F values).

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Insert Table 1 about here

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The stepwise linear regression produced six variables from those four sets that made statistically significant contributions to criterion

prediction. Table 2 summarizes the data from this analysis. The employed subjects had fewer credits in the major, fewer C's on the transcript, and were slightly younger than those who were not employed. Also the employed subjects had slightly more dependents, higher grades in the major, and received more scholarships than the subjects who were not employed.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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Academic performance variables contributed the most weight to the prediction of employment or not for these groups of job applicants. This finding is consistent with Hakel & Mannel (1969) and Dipboye, Fromkin, & Wiback (1975) but not with Carroll (1966). Not only were grades in the major a discriminating variable but a more subtle variable, total credit hours in major, also appeared. Fewer academic hours for the employed subjects suggests that the quickest, most direct way to graduation is a factor that may be observable in some fashion to the credentials appraiser. That factor, plus being younger, although with more dependents, fits the picture of the young person who is well-motivated toward direct, goal-oriented accomplishments. Although recommendations and work experience variables have been judged as important or preferred (Burnett & Mason, 1975), these variables did not make substantial contributions to criterion prediction in the above analyses.

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Table 1

Results from Setwise Linear Regression Elimination Procedure

Predicting Employment or Not

| Step | Set Eliminated | Set Description | Number of Variables | R | $R^2$ | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | None | All sets | 46 | .711 | .506 | |
| 2 | 5 | Work experiences | 4 | .686 | .471 | 0.80 |
| 3 | 8 | Recommendations | 8 | .658 | .432 | 2.23 |
| 4 | 7 | Ratings of personal qualities | 6 | .643 | .413 | 2.15 |
| 5 | 3 | Activities and offices | 5 | .606 | .367 | 0.68 |
| 6 | 4 | Financial aids | 4 | .567 | .322 | 2.69* |
| 7 | 2 | Overall and major GPA | 4 | .517 | .267 | 4.00* |
| 8 | 1 | Biographical data | 6 | .438 | .192 | 2.46* |
| 9 | 6 | Courses and credits in major | 9 | | | 3.11* |

* p .05.

Table 2

Variables With Significant Contributions to Criterion Prediction

| Set | Variable | Means | | r |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Employed | Not Employed | |
| 6 | Total Credits in Major | 69.09 | 76.67 | -.20 |
| 6 | No. of C's (transcript) | 9.66 | 14.34 | -.31 |
| 1 | Age | 23.03 | 23.72 | -.14 |
| 1 | No. dependents | 0.73 | 0.48 | .14 |
| 2 | GPA in major | 3.16 | 2.83 | .31 |
| 4 | Percent Scholarships | 0.41 | 0.16 | .28 |